

1 BEFORE THE
2 ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION
3 UTILITY SUPPLIER DIVERSITY POLICY SESSION

4 Tuesday, September 13, 2022

5 Chicago, Illinois

6 Met pursuant to notice at 2:00 PM at 160 North
7 LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois.

8
9 PRESENT:

10 CARRIE ZALEWSKI, Chairwoman

11 ETHAN KIMBREL, Commissioner

12 MICHAEL CARRIGAN, Commissioner

13 ANN MCCABE, Commissioner
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21 BRIDGES COURT REPORTING
22 BY: Quinn Dean
 Electronic Reporter

1 CHAIR ZALEWSKI: Okay. I'm going to go ahead and
2 get started. Good afternoon. It is really wonderful
3 to see a full room. We appreciate everyone's
4 attendance here.

5 I am going to go ahead and call the
6 2022 Annual Utility Supplier Diversity Session to
7 order. I have with me Commissioners Kimbrel, Carrigan,
8 and McCabe with me in Chicago; so we have a quorum. So
9 again, welcome.

10 The ICC began holding these policy
11 sessions to report supply chain diverse spend by large
12 utilities seven years ago, and every year we have seen
13 positive gains reflecting both a clear and continuous
14 commitment to communities of color and a desire to
15 reflect the diversity of the state.

16 During the previous seven years,
17 utility spending with minority, women, and
18 veteran-owned businesses grew from an average of
19 15 percent in the first year to over 33 percent, and we
20 have utilities that are inching up near 50 percent
21 diverse spend. It's really incredible.

22 Put another way, of the 5.1 billion

1 dollars spent among the six utility companies, 44
2 percent were -- 2.2 billion dollars was spent with
3 diverse suppliers. So it's really an incredible number
4 and something to be celebrated.

5 It's also exciting to see the steady
6 increase with diverse Illinois-based businesses,
7 meaning the dollars spend help grow Illinois-based
8 diverse suppliers and the surrounding economy. But
9 work remains. And instead of resting on the good work
10 that has already been done, we continue to do a deep
11 dive of the information in partnership with the
12 utilities to examine the particular areas that need the
13 most work.

14 For example, you'll hear today
15 discussions on ways to increase the area of
16 professional services. We've had a panel like this
17 before, and we thought it was important again to
18 highlight it again this year.

19 Our director of diversity and community
20 affairs, who you will hear from soon, Jeanine Robinson,
21 is in her third year managing the reporting and
22 organizing of the policy session, and she continues to

1 think of new ways to create new opportunities for
2 diverse suppliers in Illinois.

3 Under her leadership, the ICC staff
4 collaborates with other state agencies, including DCEO
5 and CMS, to promote workshops designed to solicit
6 opportunities from diverse vendors.

7 The ICC also works closely with grass
8 roots organizations promoting communities of color and
9 women-owned businesses, and the Commission has
10 developed relationships with various assisting
11 agencies, including but not limited to the Hispanic
12 American Construction Industry Association, the Federal
13 of Women Contractors of Chicago, the Black Contractors
14 Owners and Executives, the Women Business Development
15 Center, the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and
16 the Minority Supplier Diversity Counsel, to name a few.

17 And the Commission remains committed to
18 creating new and expanding existing opportunities and
19 ensure that we support those businesses that have
20 historically been left behind.

21 We also look forward to the new tools
22 that CEJA brings to ensure Illinois remains a leader in

1 the space of equity and inclusion. We know the story
2 of supplier diversity is not done.

3 So turning the page, we move on to
4 today's program. Today we have a two-part agenda for
5 our policy session.

6 First, we're going to hear from the
7 presidents and CEOs of the largest utilities about
8 their diverse spend over the previous years, and then
9 we will have a discussion with various executives from
10 the utility companies regarding diversity within the
11 professional services industry.

12 We have had invited Leader Marcus Evans
13 to kick us off. I know he has a very busy schedule.
14 So when he does -- when he's able to attend, we'll turn
15 the floor over to him. And I did want to recognize
16 Representative Delgado is with us as well. We always
17 appreciate her leadership and support.

18 And if I missed any other elected
19 officials, please give me a wave and stand and
20 introduce yourself. I don't see anyone, but we always
21 appreciate the support of our general assembly members.
22 It's really important. With that, then I'll just go

1 ahead and turn it directly over to Jeanine.

2 MS. ROBINSON: Madam -- oh, there we go. Thank
3 you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, and thank you again
4 for joining the Illinois Commerce Commission for our
5 Annual Utility Supplier Diversity Policy Session. I am
6 Jeanine Robinson, the director of Diversity and
7 Community Affairs.

8 I am excited to be a part of my third
9 Supplier Diversity Policy Session and my first in
10 person. I will be the moderator for both portions of
11 our session today.

12 Per Section 5-117, our Public Utility
13 Act requires the large regulated utilities to report on
14 their diverse supplier goals and actual spending on the
15 diverse suppliers in the previous calendar year.

16 I'd like to take a moment to let the
17 public know, as mentioned, diversity is very important
18 to us.

19 Prior to the ICC holding the Annual
20 Supplier Diversity Policy Session, there are a few
21 things that we do here at ICC regarding supplier
22 diversity reporting with the Public Utilities Act --

1 per the Public Utilities Act. Sorry.

2 The reports that the utility companies
3 are required to submit are due in April 15 of every
4 year, which is posted on our website.

5 Upon receipt of these reports, my team
6 and I do a thorough analyzation and the review of the
7 reports, after which the there's a meeting with
8 commissioners and with the six utility companies
9 presented today to discuss the reports, opportunities,
10 progress, things of that sort, challenges and concerns.
11 This policy session is the last leg of that process.
12 So I would like people to know that it's just not us
13 having a policy session and having a conversation about
14 it. There's a lot that goes on behind the scenes.

15 And so as I said, during the first half
16 of our session, the CEOs will share their company's
17 highlights on diversity spend overall. We will hear
18 about best practices, challenges, plans going forward,
19 adjustments, and strides. Each speaker will have about
20 five minutes or so to present. That will be followed
21 by the question and answer session. As always, the
22 chairman and commissioners are welcome to ask questions

1 throughout the session. If time permits, we will
2 address questions if they are submitted via email.
3 That email address is icc.diversity@illinois.gov.

4 Let us begin. We will start with
5 Justin Ladner of Illinois American Water, Torrence
6 Hinton of Peoples Gas North Shore Gas, Wendell Dallas
7 of Nicor Gas, Gil Quiniones of ComEd, Lenard Singh of
8 Ameren Illinois, and finally Dave Carter of Aqua
9 Illinois. Justin?

10 MR. LADNER: All right. Thank you, Jeanine,
11 Madam Chair, Commission. It's a privilege to be here
12 today. I appreciate the opportunity to have this very
13 important conversation. I'm going to spend a couple of
14 moments talking about the IUBDC and some of the
15 highlights. The Chair, you alluded to several of them.
16 And then I'll go and talk about some of Illinois
17 American Water's accomplishments through 2021.

18 Before I do that, I want to make a
19 quick introduction to the gentleman to my left. Jim
20 Gallegos is American Water's new executive vice
21 president and general counsel, so he's at our parent
22 company. And he's going to accompany me through some

1 of this presentation today and speak to some of the
2 focus on professional services, particularly legal and
3 inclusion and diversity and the transparency that
4 American Water values.

5 So going into the IUBDC, as I look to
6 my right, and we we've joked about this a little bit,
7 we've had a bit of an applecart turnover in leadership
8 among our utilities here in the state. And what came
9 of that is one repeat presenter in front of you, which
10 is me. And I've been excited to step into the
11 chairmanship role as the senior tenure with the
12 transition that we've had because it's important for us
13 to maintain consistency, stability of this very
14 important mission.

15 Going through some of the highlights, I
16 want to also mention in support of that, we've hired a
17 new executive director this year, and Nancy Collins has
18 been tremendous in giving us some structure and much
19 needed organization. She has led us through some of
20 the transition that we've gone through over the course
21 of the year so that we still have some accomplishments
22 -- some tremendous ones of which four scholarships to

1 the Northwestern Kellogg Business School.

2 I can't stress enough, and we talked
3 about in our board meeting how critical this is to
4 really help our diverse partners grow their business
5 acumen, their network. I spoke to an individual that
6 was awarded one for the first time this year last night
7 and to hear firsthand how much he learned by being
8 exposed to that expertise from professors as well as a
9 peer network helped confirm that that is meeting the
10 mission and the intent is being satisfied.

11 We also did an ESG one-on-one webinar
12 here for the first time this year where our companies
13 pulled together ESG experts and had over 80 attendees
14 attend and better understand what the needs are of our
15 respective companies when it comes to ESG and what our
16 expectations are, very much kind of an educational
17 piece of our curriculum.

18 And then also our external engagement,
19 the Mid-American Regulatory Conference. Several of the
20 individuals on this panel here participated in a panel,
21 former Commissioner Bocanegra on what does it mean to
22 be utility to really lead the next steps in workforce

1 and supplier diversity. And that was the general
2 session. I think it was the largest attended session
3 of MARC, and that shows how much we're invested in it.

4 Building forward, you said it shared
5 2.2 billion, 2021. This table right here, 2017,
6 1.1 billion. So five years, 2X, okay? That's the
7 compound interest. That's the good that's happening
8 here, and we're excited to see what'll happen in the
9 next five years.

10 So transitioning to Illinois American
11 Water. I want to just mention some of our high level
12 numbers, and I'll move pretty quickly through here.
13 And you can see \$65 million in diverse spend. The
14 takeaway is we're continuing to raise the bar each
15 year, okay? We're raising our goals. You can see that
16 3.3 percent above the goal that we had of 25, which was
17 already an improvement over the 2020 goal. And so you
18 see that 13 percent year-over-year increase.

19 The VBE spend, I want to spend a quick
20 moment on that. You see that picture? This is the
21 work actually in progress. So this is an example in
22 Alton in the Metro East Area where an acquisition --

1 they had a long-term patrol plan with Illinois EPA
2 where they were having sanitary sewer overflows. This
3 is the heart of the challenge on infrastructure.

4 We partnered with a veteran excavating
5 company for the first time on a job of this magnitude
6 of \$15 million, and they're helping us work through
7 that long-term control plan to the tune of already
8 fixing the first SSO requirement. So we continue to
9 work and build relationships there.

10 Moving to the next slide, I also want
11 to mentioned that Illinois American was -- received the
12 most outstanding supplier diversity program award
13 within the American Water footprint last year. So out
14 of 13 states in which we operate, we were recognized as
15 the number one. And that's a tremendous testament to
16 our team that's done a lot of great work.

17 So on this slide, going -- narrowing
18 down to Illinois spend, 46 million with Illinois-based
19 businesses spread across MBE, WB, and BB, we've
20 increased it by 20 percent. As you can see those boxes
21 on the bottom, that's the impact. We're talking
22 significant job growth, infrastructure investment,

1 taxes. It's clear to see the impact that we're making.

2 Moving to the next slide, professional
3 services highlights. This is where we want to talk
4 about some of the recent focus. And we've heard loud
5 and clear that this is an area that needs to be met
6 with some intentionality. And as you can see that far
7 right on that bar graph, the print is very small, but
8 that's engineering services, and that's an area of
9 107 percent increase.

10 And I have to give credit to our new
11 program director of supply diversity, Jennifer
12 Morrison. The expertise and strategy that she's
13 brought into American Water in joining us this year,
14 she has helped our internal team. I use the phrase
15 widen their aperture, but there are diverse partners
16 out there and they are very qualified. We need to work
17 on that intentional matchmaking.

18 And you can see right there how some of
19 the contracts have been awarded to credible diverse
20 partners and engineering services.

21 And then the next one, I'm going to
22 mention real quick and hand off to Jim is architectural

1 services. And that's on the far left, and it's hardly
2 noticeable, but that's an example where we've already
3 made progress with an architectural firm that's diverse
4 to help us with our Chicago building. And that's a
5 direct result of McKissack & McKissack, of Jennifer
6 working with our engineering team. So at this time, I
7 want to hand it over to Jim to speak to a little bit
8 more on our professional services in terms of legal.

9 MR. GALLEGOS: Sounds great. And thank you very
10 much. I appreciate the opportunity to address you.
11 And at American Water, diversity is just critical, and
12 we look at it it's critical as far as workforce, but
13 also supporting the suppliers in the communities where
14 we operate. And it really starts at the board level
15 and the executive team level. There's oversight.
16 There's engagement. And if you want to change to slide
17 one, please.

18 I won't go through the numbers there,
19 but these are our statistics. This is our corporate
20 scorecard. We actually do part of our pay -- our
21 annual pay, is based on diversity. So it's very, very
22 important. It's very, very important that we keep our

1 eye on the ball.

2 We educate our employees on what can
3 they do to actually -- how can they do their part in
4 improving diversity within the company but also with
5 regard to our suppliers. And what we really try to
6 emphasize to our employees is why is this important.

7 It's important. Again, we think it's
8 very important because it makes the company stronger,
9 makes it more resilient. As we look at issues, as we
10 look at opportunities, we're looking at it through
11 different filters.

12 But then more importantly, our
13 customers expect this. Our shareholders expect this.
14 So yes, it's the right thing to do. But, again, from
15 an organizational perspective, it really enriches the
16 fabric. You want to go to the next slide.

17 Looking at this, we're very, very proud
18 of the diversity statistics of the Law Department.
19 We're 73 percent diverse within the organization.
20 Very, very proud of that number. In Illinois, our
21 outside counsel spend is low, but 40 percent of that
22 spend is to diverse suppliers, so we are very proud of

1 that statistic.

2 However, even when we're using law
3 firms that are not diverse, we ask that our work go to
4 diverse attorneys and staff members in that
5 organization. We've partnered with an organization
6 called Diversity Lab. They'll help us send out surveys
7 to non-diverse firms asking them to go through their
8 bills to pull out how much of the spend was actually
9 spent on diverse attorneys. We ask about their
10 programs. We ask on how we can keep that number
11 improving, increasing.

12 And then throughout the state, we want
13 our attorneys and we want our staff very, very engaged
14 in diversity. So what we've done is, for example, in
15 Illinois, we have two programs, one with a law firm
16 where we've taken a diverse law student. We've
17 mentored them. We've exposed them to utility law.
18 We've just started another program with Loyola
19 University.

20 And then also what we're doing, and
21 this is an initiative we're starting this year;
22 attorneys want to do pro bono, and so what we're trying

1 to do is get our attorneys to do pro bono, however,
2 really focused on our service territory.

3 So we're starting a program. It's
4 called Wills for Heros - where we would actually be
5 doing wills for first responders, police, firefighters,
6 but then also partnering, for example, with the Urban
7 League, and how can we provide legal services
8 partnering with low income organizations, also with law
9 firms to provide services to our constituents, our
10 customers, which are really very, very important.

11 MR. LADNER: Thanks, Jim.

12 Move to the next slide. So I'll close
13 this out talking about just where we're going, okay,
14 and scaling growth. There's an opportunity to leverage
15 regional partners with the American Water footprint,
16 you know, focus on businesses that are absolutely
17 headquartered in Illinois, but we have a sister company
18 in Indiana and Missouri, and that may help certain
19 diverse partners make the investment to become partners
20 for us.

21 And then the second comment I want to
22 make here is really a call out to the IUBDC. And what

1 we're trying to convey there is there's an opportunity
2 to find or to identify gas pipeline installers. Well,
3 there's an overlap there in the work requirement for
4 water mains, wastewater mains, and is there an
5 opportunity for them to do more work with the water
6 side of the business.

7 And again, our team, led by Jennifer,
8 has really been focusing on that. We're in the process
9 of learning one another, and they've come and visited
10 some of our sites. Our team's gone to visit some of
11 their sites to see just what the synergies could look
12 like.

13 And then lastly, business acumen.
14 We've got to continue to educate our diverse community
15 and partners on what the water and wastewater business
16 is. We understand there's a lot of opportunity, but
17 there needs to be an explanation and education provided
18 on our part on what it is that we do and how they could
19 potentially partner with us.

20 So at that time, I'll conclude and see
21 if there's any questions from Commission.

22 CHAIR ZALEWSKI: Can I just ask a quick question

1 about the Loyola University Program? Can you just give
2 a little bit more detail about it? Is it run through
3 the law school? How does somebody engage in that type
4 of program?

5 MR. GALLEGOS: It is run through the law school.
6 We've reached out to various organizations like the law
7 schools. We've reached out to Loyola. They partnered
8 with us. They'll select a student that would be
9 assigned to us throughout the year, and we would be
10 working with them.

11 CHAIR ZALEWSKI: Is it an internship program?

12 MR. GALLEGOS: It is an internship.

13 CHAIR ZALEWSKI: Got it. Okay. Thanks.

14 MR. LADNER: Yeah. They get approximately like
15 five hours of work. And I'll say that this is our
16 first year of doing it. Initially, it was two
17 students, but there's interest. Now we have three, so
18 it's been well received so far.

19 COMMISSIONER CARRIGAN: Mr. Ladner, can you
20 briefly discuss your cyber security concerns?

21 MR. LADNER: Certainly, Commissioner Carrigan.

22 You know, I think as my peers and

1 I -- we discussed this at our board meeting. You know,
2 historically, there's been challenges in safety bonding
3 and general insurance. And certainly, cyber security
4 is now at the forefront after seeing all the cyber
5 attacks. That's something we're focused on. The
6 remote nature of water facilities makes that especially
7 critical, and the different state of technology, if you
8 will.

9 And combined with -- U.S. EPA is
10 actually looking at the Safe Drinking Water Act and
11 making revisions to require for compliance certain
12 cyber security measures not only by the operator, but
13 to the point of this discussion, our supply chain. And
14 so is that the right amount of insurance that our
15 diverse partners need to have based on the work that
16 they do? That's kind of our current frontier that
17 we're trying to work through. But it's an absolute
18 challenge, Commissioner.

19 COMMISSIONER KIMBREL: Mr. Ladner, you had
20 mentioned your architectural spend. Do you want to go
21 into more detail there?

22 MR. LADNER: Certainly. I view that as an

1 example of the opportunity that's out there. And when
2 I look at the engineering spend on the far right of
3 that graph, that's an example of what can be done when
4 we focus on it.

5 So we're trying to take that same
6 approach of spending time with our engineers to match
7 them with diverse partners and scale that over to
8 architectural.

9 And we do a fair amount of
10 construction, but we've got to be very focused on when
11 we do go vertical, there are diverse architectural
12 firms out there that we need to work with. And a key
13 part there was really finding a credible partner to
14 start with, and we feel that we've got that with
15 McKissack, and we'll look to do that all throughout the
16 state.

17 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you. Next we'll have
18 Torrence Hinton.

19 MR. HINTON: Good afternoon to the Chair, Members
20 of the Commission, and ICC staff.

21 This is the first time I've had the
22 chance and opportunity to speak before the full

1 Commission since becoming president of Peoples Gas and
2 North Shore Gas. It is truly a privilege to be with
3 all of you here today.

4 I've had the pleasure of meeting some
5 of you individually, and I'm certainly looking forward
6 to working with the entire Commission and staff as we
7 move forward.

8 As I get started, I do want to say that
9 I'm a lifelong Chicagoan born, raised, and educated
10 right here in the City of Chicago. I grew up in the
11 South Shore neighborhood, attended Chicago public
12 schools, had the pleasure of obtaining my undergraduate
13 and both graduate degrees, again, right here in the
14 city. I worked most of my entire career at Peoples Gas
15 and North Shore Gas starting out as an engineer and
16 having the good fortune of working in many different
17 capacities over the years.

18 So as a kid from the south side of
19 Chicago, I am personally invested in the work we do and
20 the people we serve every day. And providing economic
21 opportunity in the communities we serve is a big part
22 of that, which leads me to the reason why we're here

1 today, our supplier diversity initiative.

2 2021 was a unique year in a few ways at
3 Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas. The successful
4 completion of several major construction projects at
5 Peoples Gas in 2020 meant that our overall procurement
6 spend was smaller in 2021.

7 There were also obviously the continued
8 effects of the pandemic and that global supply chain
9 issues experienced in all sectors of the national and
10 global economies.

11 So our challenge last year was to keep
12 projects on schedule and meet our supplier diversity
13 objectives and to do so seamlessly with a smaller scope
14 of projects.

15 2021 was a test for our supplier
16 diversity initiative, a test that ultimately proved our
17 program's resiliency and the ability to adjust in
18 changing circumstance. As you see on slide 1, in 2021,
19 we spent 123 million dollars through our supplier
20 diversity initiative.

21 Happy to report that it was a fifth
22 consecutive year we spent more than a 120 million

1 dollars with diverse suppliers.

2 As I've mentioned in the past, this is
3 twice the amount spent in 2015, when WC Energy Group
4 first acquired Peoples Gas and North Shore Gas and we
5 initiated our current supplier diversity initiative as
6 it exists today.

7 Spending on diverse suppliers accounted
8 for 25 percent of our total procurement in 2021 for the
9 second year in a row.

10 We maintained that level of spending
11 despite the fact that overall procurement span was
12 down. If you go to the second slide for me, please.

13 60 percent of our diverse spending in
14 '21 was with Illinois-based companies. That represents
15 more than 74 million dollars.

16 67 percent of our total diverse spend
17 was with businesses owned by minorities. And all MBEs
18 earned more than 82 million dollars through our
19 supplier diversity initiative.

20 31 percent of our diverse spend,
21 representing 38 million dollars, was with businesses
22 owned by women. 42 percent was with Tier 1 suppliers.

1 And finally, 31 percent was with firms
2 that provide professional services, accounting for more
3 than \$38 million of spend in 2021. Next slide, please.

4 Our safety modernization program
5 continues to be the key driver for our supplier
6 diversity initiative in 2021.

7 Last year 44 percent of the total
8 diverse spend was with SMP alone. That amounts to 54
9 million dollars earned by diverse firms working on SMP,
10 which was only a third of our total expenditures for
11 SMP last year. And I'm pleased to report that we're
12 committed to sustaining that level of spending as we
13 continue the critical work of monetizing our delivery
14 system as in 2020.

15 SMP kept our supply diversity
16 initiative on track in the midst of the economic
17 challenges of the pandemic.

18 The professional services category also
19 continues to drive the success of our program.
20 Spending with diverse professional service firms held
21 steady in '21 despite the reduction in overall
22 procurement spending.

1 And going forward, professional
2 services will continue to be a top priority for us.
3 Next slide, please.

4 Our supplier diversity initiative
5 remains a key focus of our strategic plan. Each year
6 during our budgeting process, we set supplier diversity
7 goals based on our overall procurement plan.

8 One of our top priorities is to use
9 local companies wherever possible. Peoples Gas and
10 North Shore Gas are significant drivers of the regional
11 economy, and utilizing local companies allows us to
12 make an even bigger impact in the communities that we
13 serve.

14 As part of our program, we set clear
15 expectations for our major prime suppliers, but we
16 expect them to meet a minimum diverse level of
17 spending. We promote opportunities in a wide range of
18 sectors, and we continue to grow the role of our
19 professional services.

20 Our supply diversity and procurement
21 staffs work closely with top management to find new
22 opportunities in legal, financial, and other types of

1 professional services.

2 Wherever possible, we explore the use
3 of joint ventures. Joint ventures help diverse
4 companies gain the expertise and capabilities to become
5 even more competitive. And we also continue to partner
6 with business associations and the Illinois Utilities
7 Business Diversity Counsel to create new opportunities
8 for diverse businesses.

9 A primary focus of that effort is to
10 continue to develop the expertise and capabilities of
11 diverse firms in the natural gas construction area.

12 As I said previously, our Safety
13 Modernization Program is the largest single driver of
14 our supplier diversity initiative. So developing
15 diverse gas construction firms will remain critical to
16 growing diverse spending in the future.

17 Together these strategies comprise a
18 business model that has allowed us to consistently meet
19 and even exceed our supplier diversity goals repeatedly
20 over the last seven years.

21 In closing, providing opportunities in
22 the communities we serve is deeply personal to me.

1 It's also one of our core values at Peoples Gas North
2 Shore Gas as well as our parent company WC Energy
3 Group.

4 In 2021, our supplier diversity
5 initiative proved to be resilient and flexible. That
6 resiliency and flexibility will serve us well as we
7 continue to grow up program and expand those
8 opportunities for diverse businesses.

9 I look forward to working with the
10 Commission and other key stakeholders to continue to
11 create economic opportunities throughout service
12 territories.

13 Thank you again for the opportunity to
14 present this afternoon, and happy to answer any
15 questions.

16 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you, Torrence.

17 Next we'll have Wendell Davis. I mean,
18 I'm sorry, Wendell Dallas.

19 MR. DALLAS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair and
20 Commissioners and the ICC staff. Thank you for this
21 wonderful opportunity to be here today to talk about
22 Nicor Gas's performance. And thank you for hosting

1 this.

2 As you've heard, I'm fairly new to the
3 Chicago area, but I'm greatly impressed by the work
4 ethic and the commitment of my fellow colleagues here
5 as I've joined the IUBDC and what we're doing and why
6 we're doing it.

7 Representing Nicor Gas, being a part of
8 Southern Company Gas, we are very committed to making
9 sure that all of us grow, our communities grow. And so
10 reporting our numbers here in this first slide, you'll
11 see I'm happy to -- really to celebrate this with you.

12 We achieved 45.8 percent of our source
13 spend with minority women veteran-owned business
14 enterprises. That's resulted in 414 million for 2021.
15 49 percent of the diverse spend was with Illinois-based
16 companies, which is 7 and-a-half percent higher than
17 2020.

18 We also continue to add organizations
19 to our database. You know, as we increase our network,
20 our influence, we added 90 organizations this past
21 year. Of those 90 organizations, 24 were
22 Illinois-based firms. And then, the other -- the stuff

1 that I want to just share based on this slide here is
2 if you look -- go back to 2018, Nicor Gas has spent
3 more than about approximately 1.6 billion dollars in
4 this space.

5 And so we're very proud of the hard
6 work and commitment of the entire team that's on the
7 ground each and every day and more importantly, our
8 partners, the vendors, suppliers that we're working
9 with. That's the reason why -- that we're -- we feel
10 we're successful because it takes an entire village to
11 be able to execute well in this space. If we go to the
12 next slide.

13 One of the things we -- I'd like to
14 share here is as you go through our process, the reason
15 why we're so committed to doing this, and we've got a
16 lot of rigor around the structure, this is -- it's not
17 only the reason why we do it, but it's how we do it.
18 Community involvement is a major part of that.

19 So we're going to always make sure
20 we're leveraging not only internally what our employees
21 do within the communities but also with our partners.

22 If you look at our five foundational

1 principles here that are laid out; advocacy,
2 development, procurement, reporting, and sustainability
3 - you might have seen it in the past that we had these
4 other four. Sustainability is a new one that we added.

5 Before I get to that one, I'd like to
6 hit on a couple of things. When you look at advocacy,
7 engagement, matchmaking events, panels, things like --
8 things that we're doing today, business expos, we
9 really want to make sure that every opportunity that's
10 presented to us, we're taking advantage of.

11 When you look at the slide, the next
12 one, in development, here is an area where we have a
13 supplier diversity business development program, which
14 is connected with Southern Company Gas. Southern
15 Company Gas actually started that, which Nicor Gas is
16 the major player of. We're now basically connected
17 throughout all Southern Company, and we're actually
18 working with organizations really teaching them,
19 helping them, developing them. And we spent time.
20 It's an 18-month cohort where we actually bring in
21 vendors to work with some of our key executives to
22 really better understand what's -- how our business

1 works.

2 And then when you look at what Nicor's
3 doing specifically, we also have the diverse business
4 partnership, and that's unique to Nicor Gas.

5 Again, going back to our focus and our
6 commitment to investing more, doing more in the
7 Illinois space, that requires us to have more dialogue
8 with the individuals that are working in this space.
9 And because of these strong partnerships, we feel like
10 we will continue to make great progress, even despite
11 some of the challenges we're facing.

12 The other area that here that I hit on
13 -- what I mentioned a second ago, is sustainability.
14 Sustainability is an area when we think about what's
15 going on with ESG as part of Southern Companies, we are
16 committed to move into equity. And part of this
17 effort, we really are making -- creating stronger
18 partnerships with individuals, companies, diverse
19 suppliers in this space.

20 And because of that, we are making sure
21 that they understand the changing landscape that we're
22 all facing. Natural gas is a foundational fuel. We

1 want to be part of the future, and we're educating all
2 of our vendors and suppliers in terms of what does that
3 actually mean.

4 And one area is -- in particular is if
5 we think about as we develop business, we're paying a
6 lot of attention to make sure that they understand,
7 like, opportunities like renewable natural gas, for
8 instance, that there's opportunities here, what can
9 they do in this space. And working with our suppliers
10 and vendors, it's helping us to make sure they
11 understand we're looking for ways to take advantage of
12 these opportunities.

13 We can go on to the next slide.

14 Here, as we look at -- the point that I
15 want to focus on here is providing education and access
16 to our diverse businesses.

17 It really starts with us investing in
18 our communities, working very closely with individuals
19 that grow up in these communities.

20 And when we look at how our diverse
21 suppliers are building their networks, we want to make
22 sure we're part of the solution with them.

1 Making stronger communities as they
2 recruit talent, workforce into their organizations, we
3 want to be a part of the solution. We're working with
4 them to help them do this.

5 We have the Women in Construction
6 Matchmaker Program. This is a -- we hosted a virtual
7 networking event to connect the Federation of Women
8 Contractor members with decision-makers at Nicor Gas,
9 some of our major partners, Precision Pipeline, NPL,
10 Pipe Strong, and KS Energy Services.

11 We also had an event where we educated
12 suppliers about the different types of industries
13 within our space with -- working with the Illinois
14 Manufacturing Association, the equity and inclusion
15 series, we partnered with the United Scrap Metal and
16 the Women's Business Development Counsel for panel
17 discussion as part of that D and I series.

18 These are interwoven. These are
19 connected, and the more we do in this space, the
20 better. Then we also feel like our understanding of
21 where we're headed not only as energy -- in the energy
22 sector, but as we're headed as a company and the

1 opportunities that are being made available, these
2 small touch points actually go a long way.

3 Another point that I'd like to hit on
4 too is let's talk engineering. Last fall, Nicor Gas
5 partnered with the Hispanic American Construction
6 Industry Association. But also, virtual networking
7 events provide the Hispanic and Latinx Business
8 Communities the opportunity to learn how to be
9 successful in doing business with major utilities such
10 as Nicor Gas and connecting them with engineering firms
11 and helping them to see what those subcontracting
12 opportunities are.

13 So again, working with our network,
14 making sure that we're investing heavily in, and
15 ensuring that that network not only touches Illinois,
16 but also reaches through all of Southern Company's
17 footprint as well. We can go to our next side.

18 Just to hit on a couple of the
19 challenges, I know these are not unique to any one
20 company. We are dealing with the market volatility,
21 the challenges there, what's going on. We all know
22 what the rising cost -- material shortages, the

1 geopolitical tensions creates a lot of uncertainty.
2 And so as we educate and work with our partners on
3 understanding that's a challenge we're all dealing
4 with, we have to figure out how to navigate those
5 waters. We've done very well in '21, but those
6 challenges are not gone. They're still here. We're
7 facing them real time today.

8 The other thing is that with growth and
9 opportunity, you create success. And in this area of
10 success, a lot of our suppliers are being acquired by
11 other organizations that are non diverse. Well, we're
12 not stopping there and saying, "Well, that's -- you
13 know, what do we do about it?" We'll actually continue
14 to make sure we're investing into -- in the entire
15 network. We put requirements on our Tier 1 contractors
16 to invest in Tier 2 to create more opportunities. But
17 the growth, the change, the dynamics that are taking
18 place, that's the part of business that we're going to
19 continue to face, and we have to continue to invest in.

20 We're really -- and we're very excited
21 by the fact that we have made significant investments
22 in this space and we're going to continue to move. So

1 change is that last item there, and change is something
2 that we're embracing. And the more we educate our
3 suppliers and vendors, we feel that's going to make us
4 a stronger -- not only stronger Illinois, but within
5 Southern Company, it's going to make us a stronger
6 Southern Company as well. And we go to the next slide.

7 Again, going back to local
8 partnerships, working -- we're making investments with
9 individuals that are coming up, growing in the
10 communities that we're serving, and helping individuals
11 see the opportunities, engaging with the business
12 partners and also educating them on the supplier
13 diversity opportunities with the entrepreneur
14 arrangements and other companies that are working for
15 us.

16 We feel that by making these
17 investments and bringing our partners along with us,
18 it's making sure that every one of the individuals
19 working within our framework, within our organization,
20 all the individuals we touch, they're part of the
21 solution, part of the process. And as -- we all can
22 appreciate awareness of what's happening.

1 You know, sometimes those single touch
2 points make significant differences. And by this
3 cohort that we're invested in here, this career academy
4 that we've done, it's actually creating tremendous
5 opportunity for individuals in the energy sector. We
6 can go to the next slide, the last slide.

7 What I'd like to do in conclusion is
8 that -- you know, we're currently executing our 2022
9 Business Diversity Plan, and we're on track to achieve
10 our results, and we're still navigating many of those
11 challenges I just talked about earlier. But our
12 supplier diversity efforts, they really expanded to
13 focus on sustainability, inclusive growth for all of
14 Southern Company.

15 The goal is to have a significant
16 positive impact on the communities we're serving. And
17 we do that not only from its internal standpoint but as
18 learning from working with our vendors and our
19 suppliers. That's what we feel is a game changer.
20 That's making a big difference. Investing in that
21 development side is key and critical to our future.

22 We value -- we appreciate and value

1 your partnership as commissioners. And my -- I
2 value -- we value and appreciate all my colleagues here
3 in IUBDC, and I know that we're making a significant
4 difference. And we look forward to continuing to
5 execute all the diversity objectives that are being set
6 before us. And I'll ask -- see if there's any
7 questions you may have. And thank you for the
8 opportunity to speak this afternoon.

9 COMMISSIONER MCCABE: In going through the
10 reports this year and in our one-on-one conversations,
11 just congrats on the variety of ways the companies are
12 going about increasing and supporting diverse
13 suppliers. And for Nicor what really jumped out is the
14 number of new suppliers -- diverse suppliers you were
15 able to obtain in 2021. So how'd you do it? And are
16 you sharing some of those best practices within the
17 IUBDC?

18 MR. DALLAS: Well, I'll answer the second
19 question first. Yes, we are sharing those best
20 practices. And again, as I stated before, the IUBDC is
21 a great venue for us to be able to better serve
22 Illinois, and that's the reason why we're doing this in

1 the first place; right?

2 The part about how we're making a
3 difference in finding more, it's actually really
4 listening to our suppliers, you know, what challenges
5 are they facing. And when we are -- they know that
6 we're investing in putting requirements on our Tier 1
7 contractors. Well, for them, it's like, "What are they
8 doing? How can we help them grow in development? Who
9 are you working for? Who are you trying to find? Who
10 are you recruiting?"

11 And listening to that -- those -- their
12 suggestions and recommendations, enables us to be able
13 to invest more in that space. And again, that personal
14 touch, working with executives, key leaders within an
15 organization, that's the game changer. And the more we
16 do that, the more we learn, the better we become as an
17 industry.

18 COMMISSIONER KIMBREL: Mr. Dallas and also
19 Mr. Hinton, would you both like to address the
20 challenges you faced with your diverse spend?
21 Obviously, the numbers have been improving over the
22 years, but if you could just touch upon that.

1 MR. HINTON: Thank you, Commissioner. Yeah,
2 specifically for us at Peoples, you know, we -- part of
3 our diverse spend for the last three or four years has
4 been an investment in our facilities. I'll refer to it
5 as a facilities of the future. And that program, while
6 not 100 percent completed, is substantially completed,
7 and we saw a drop-off in spend specifically in 2021
8 related to that effort. But again, as I indicated in
9 my prepared remarks, our Safety Modernization Program,
10 continuing to upgrade our delivery system, getting it
11 ready for the future will remain a staple part of our
12 spending as we move forward.

13 MR. DALLAS: One of our -- as I stated a second
14 ago talking about the acquisitions that are occurring
15 in this space, that's one challenge that we're facing,
16 but another is the varying types of work. As our work
17 changes every year, we don't have the same number that
18 we're working from. Well, when you look at our number
19 here in 2021, we had over 200,000 relating to pipeline
20 construction services space. We've had about
21 80 million in the professional services. Facilities is
22 around 47.

1 So in these -- all these various
2 buckets, as we have changes occurring in that space,
3 you got to -- we're trying to figure out ways to make
4 sure that as the numbers change, are we still touching
5 those percentages at the same time the new objectives
6 that we have. So in the safety and other pipeline
7 projects, we're making sure that our Tier 1 contractors
8 are looking for more companies, organizations to help
9 us to protect and grow our percentages, our numbers.

10 CHAIR ZALEWSKI: If there are no questions, I'm
11 going to take a pause. I see that we've been joined by
12 Leader Evans. The Super Bowl has the halftime of the
13 weekend where we have Leader Evans, which I would say
14 is much better. So we're going to go ahead and just
15 turn over to him. I'm just going to introduce you
16 briefly.

17 Leader Evans, for those of you who
18 don't know, was the principal sponsor of the historic
19 CEJA Bill. He has a lot of strong, strong, important
20 leadership in Springfield. He's championed advocating
21 for minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses in
22 Illinois throughout his career.

1 Representative Evans has served in the
2 General Assembly since 2012, and he serves on various
3 commission -- or community -- excuse me, committees
4 within the General Assembly, including but not limiting
5 to the assistant majority -- as an assistant majority
6 leader, serving as the chairman of the Labor and
7 Commerce Committee, as a member of the Revenue and
8 Finance Committee, and Appropriation of Human Service
9 Committee as well as the bicameral Legislative Audit
10 Commission.

11 Representative Evans is a leading voice
12 in ensuring opportunities for all Illinois residents.
13 And he works tirelessly to figure out ways to support
14 Illinois business and community workforce. And on that
15 note, I am very grateful for Leader Evans's leadership
16 on ensuring opportunities for everyone in Illinois.
17 And I'm grateful for his friendship always and, of
18 course, for him to take the time to come with us -- to
19 speak with us today. Thank you for being here, and
20 I'll turn over to you.

21 MR. EVANS: Thank you, Chairwoman or Chairman
22 Carrie Zalewski and Executive Director Mike Merchant.

1 I'm clearly an overworked public servants, judging by
2 all the things that we've done. We've done some good
3 things, you know? And thank you for inviting me again
4 to the esteemed Commission to all of you great men and
5 women out here who work in this industry. And it's a
6 very, very important industry.

7 Clearly, Public Act 97-1041 will aim to
8 increase the participation of women, minorities,
9 veterans, small business enterprises, and procurement
10 contracts with regulated entities. As a response in
11 the last seven years, there's been a steady increase,
12 and I appreciate that increase. We're talking
13 somewhere in the space of 40 percent in the total spend
14 toward diversity spend. And I appreciate that.

15 The advantages of supply diversity are
16 simple -- opening up doors that have been closed.
17 Doors that have been cement doors become wide open
18 doors. And those doors transform families,
19 communities, and lives. We see the issues in this city
20 and issues in the state and country. Your industry
21 will get -- more doors can be open. It can be the
22 solution in many of those problems, improves market

1 share, brings new ideas in, promotes modernization.

2 You all know what it does, and you've done it.

3 I guess my job is to say that whatever
4 role I can play as a legislator, I'm going to push
5 because I'm a Black man first, and I live on the South
6 Side of Chicago, and I care about working-class White
7 people, Black people and Latinos. That is my focus.
8 How do we get those communities to be improved
9 throughout the state, throughout the country? And I'm
10 going to keep pushing.

11 Your industry is critical. We passed
12 the CEJA Bill. Clean energy economy is coming. You
13 all will shepherd that clean energy economy where we're
14 going to be beneficiaries. My only charge is that
15 you've done some good things, and I appreciate what
16 you've done, but I always seek to open up new doors
17 because the cement doors are ever present for Black
18 people, poor White people, and Latinos -- ever present.

19 How do we continue to chip away at
20 those? Find places where you constantly see the same
21 White contractor, and how can you bring in some
22 diversity? Continue to be that push.

1 And we also want to -- my last thing is
2 that DEI cannot be a person, but it must be a purpose.
3 DEI cannot be a person. If you hire a pretty Black
4 woman; that is not DEI. Now if you hire a team of
5 pretty Black women and you give them a charge, that is
6 DEI -- so not person but purpose. You go out and find
7 them. And don't be afraid to find a Black contractor
8 or Latino contractor or poor White contractor who
9 doesn't do exactly what you do. Bring them in, give
10 them a partner, open them up.

11 And I've seen so many folks who may
12 have -- they can -- if they can hang shingles, they can
13 hang what? Solar panels; right? If they can build a
14 building, they can build wind turbines. Again, have
15 that opportunity because you all have the muscle to
16 power your industries to take somebody from \$2 million
17 growth to \$200 million. And you can do it. And I want
18 you to continue to do it because that is the key of the
19 community.

20 We want to be safer downtown. So your
21 mission is to make your DEI the problem solving of
22 Chicago. The mayor, she ain't got the answer. The

1 alderman ain't got the answer. We want Chicago to be
2 safer. So think about my community, think about
3 Chicago State, think about Truman College, think about
4 Morton College, you know, think about these places when
5 you're looking for people.

6 And get those Black folks, those poor
7 White folks, and those Latinos, and give your companies
8 so we can continue to do what you're doing. But thank
9 you for what you've done. And I'll be pushing and
10 prodding for you to do more. And thank you so much for
11 your leadership, our chairwoman here. We know where
12 her heart is, but you all have the key. Do what you
13 can. Do what you should. Thank you so much.

14 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you, Leader Evans. And now
15 we will have Gil Quiniones from ComEd.

16 MR. QUINIONES: Thank you very much. Chair
17 Zalewski, Commissioner Carrigan, Commissioner McCabe,
18 Commissioner Kimbrel, Director Robinson, ICC staff,
19 thank you very much, and good afternoon. I'm grateful
20 for the opportunity to report ComEd sustained efforts
21 to partner with more diverse suppliers to help us meet
22 the changing energy needs of residential and commercial

1 customers in Northern Illinois, many of whom are
2 seeking more clean energy options.

3 Illinois' Climate and Equitable Jobs
4 Act not only put us in a better position than ever to
5 meet this demand and accelerate the growth of
6 renewables, it also creates additional opportunities
7 for diverse suppliers who play critical roles on the
8 ComEd power grid. Since 2012, ComEd has spent more
9 than \$6.4 billion on diversity certified suppliers.
10 Last year, we added 153 new diversity certified
11 partners, bringing the total to 662.

12 In 2012, our diverse spend of \$253
13 million was 23 percent of our total spend. In 2021,
14 our total diverse spend of \$893 million was 42 percent
15 of our total spend. More importantly, in 2021 ComEd
16 spent \$641 million with Illinois-based diversity
17 certified suppliers. This represented more than 71
18 percent of total spend with diverse suppliers, and this
19 is \$30 million or 5 percent increase in spend with
20 Illinois-based diversity supply -- certified suppliers
21 compared to 2020.

22 My colleagues Gayle Littleton, our EVP

1 and general counsel of Exelon; Glenn Rippie, SVP of and
2 general counsel of ComEd; and Ryan Brown, our vice
3 president of treasury at Exelon will cover our
4 activities with professional services.

5 In our 2021 Supplier Diversity Report,
6 we profiled Sheryl Walker-Miller, an energy efficiency
7 specialist with more than 30 years of experience who
8 recently opened a Chicago office. She is supporting
9 our efforts to engage both suppliers and customers and
10 reach out to the most economically distressed
11 communities to help residents take advantage of new
12 energy efficiency solutions supported by CEJA. And
13 we're working hard to create opportunities for diverse
14 suppliers in this growing sector.

15 In July, ComEd celebrated the third
16 graduating class of its Energy Efficiency Service
17 Provider Incubator Program, which offers minority women
18 and veteran contractors with education and training on
19 our energy efficiency portfolio. The 2022 graduates
20 represent 33 diverse contractor business in lighting,
21 heating, and cooling and engineering. They now have
22 the ability to participate in the competitive energy

1 efficiency space and offer money-saving incentives to
2 Northern Illinois customers.

3 In January we will file our first
4 Multi-year Integrated Distribution Grid Plan pursuant
5 to CEJA. As you know, we spent the first half of this
6 year getting feedback via ICC-lead workshops from
7 customers and stakeholders on the key outcomes they
8 want ComEd to focus on. What we heard was clear.

9 They want a plan that will lay out a
10 vision for a grid that is more resilient to climate
11 threats, more cyber secure, more capable of integrating
12 and enabling new technologies such as electric vehicles
13 and renewable energy, and they want a plan that
14 supports Illinois's decarbonization goals and prepares
15 a diverse workforce for the job of the future.

16 Our mandate is straightforward:
17 Implement the investments and programs that have the
18 greatest potential to effectively and efficiently
19 achieve CEJA's goals, and build equity for all in the
20 process. In support of these priorities, we're
21 currently conducting research that will inform our
22 equity building initiatives in our grid plan.

1 One study is exploring the barriers,
2 the disadvantage that the environmental justice
3 communities face in accessing clean energy services and
4 solutions. Another study is focused on assessing the
5 clean energy transitions impact on the Illinois
6 workforce and the potential for new jobs in
7 disadvantaged communities.

8 We're confident this research will
9 prove valuable as we explore new approaches to reaching
10 into disadvantaged communities to help ensure they
11 participate in and benefit from the clean energy
12 transition for our company focus on continuous
13 improvement -- and we are -- continuous learning is
14 critical.

15 Creating opportunities for capable,
16 diverse-owned firms remains one of our highest
17 priorities and one of the great -- our greatest
18 opportunities to help build equity in Northern
19 Illinois.

20 Thank you very much, and I look forward
21 to your questions.

22 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you. Next we will have

1 Leonard Singh from Ameren Illinois.

2 MR. SINGH: Good afternoon. Good afternoon,
3 Chairwoman Zalewski, Commissioners, ICC staff,
4 Representative Delgado, Leader Evans, and esteemed
5 colleagues in the room. First of all, thank you for
6 your opportunity to be here today. And I'll start by
7 saying that DE&I is an integral part of our culture at
8 Ameren. It's a core value alongside the likes of
9 safety, integrity, and our commitment to excellence.
10 We believe that creating a culture where diverse-owned
11 businesses can grow and develop is a socioeconomic
12 imperative and all right -- just the right thing to do.
13 Next slide, please.

14 Our commitment to -- demonstrated in
15 our year-over-year performance, just to highlight a
16 few, we've increased our spend by 26 percent over 2019
17 to 2021. 34 percent of all spending is with
18 diverse-owned businesses. But in terms of -- the real
19 benefits here is how do we measure impact? Our
20 \$457 million spend in 2021 can be translated to --
21 close to 4800 jobs in the state with an economic impact
22 of roughly \$800 million. Next slide, please.

1 This slide or -- which is a heat map,
2 really shows where the spending is happening within the
3 state of Illinois. Of the dollars spent with minority
4 and women and veteran-owned business enterprises, a
5 \$186 million was with companies located in Illinois.
6 This is an increase of 49 new vendor relationships in
7 Ameren Illinois. Next slide, please.

8 I just want to give you two quick
9 examples of how we're continuing to make improvements
10 in this area. The first case is an excavation company
11 that started as a Tier 2 doing roughly about
12 \$1.2 million a year in 2018, and today they are a
13 preferred contractor doing roughly \$8 million of work
14 in Ameren Illinois. The second is with Ameren Illinois
15 sourcing PPE from a local manufacturer in Bloomington.
16 We helped to revive this company and also helped to
17 create new jobs within the State of Illinois. Next
18 slide, please.

19 You know, Leader Evans mentioned making
20 sure that there's an equitable transition in the clean
21 energy future. I think one way Ameren Illinois is
22 doing that is through the energy efficient -- energy

1 efficiency programs. So far over the last four years,
2 we spent roughly 20 -- \$45 million on diverse spend in
3 the areas of energy efficiency. And our strategy
4 really includes being intentional about expanding
5 contracts with existing diverse suppliers and
6 identifying opportunities for new diverse-owned
7 businesses.

8 These community-based partnerships
9 have -- with 30 local and diverse energy
10 contractors have led to an increased revenue of more
11 than 1 million during the last four years of the
12 portfolio plan. I think this is a good example of how
13 our supply diversity focus is impacting our customers
14 and certainly the customers -- communities we serve.
15 Next slide, please.

16 So to ensure that we make sure there's
17 continuous improvement in growth in this area, we have
18 developed a structure to support our strategy. A key
19 component of our strategy in Ameren Illinois supplier
20 is what we call the Supplier Diversity Steering
21 Committee.

22 This includes members of leadership in

1 Ameren Illinois, our supplier diversity, and sourcing
2 teams all working together to ensure that we're
3 creating the opportunity for diverse suppliers. The
4 structure demonstrates collaboration across the
5 business towards a common goal, which is contributing
6 to the success I've mentioned earlier today and will
7 continue success in the future. Next slide, please.

8 While we have made progress in terms of
9 our diversity spending, there's still more work to be
10 done. And this really isn't about awards, but I can't
11 help but recognize the team for their efforts. I just
12 want to highlight one particular award that the
13 company's received. Ameren is ranked as a top five
14 utility by DiversityInc for the fifth consecutive year,
15 a third time as being ranked the top utility, which is
16 a recognition we should all be proud of. Next slide.

17 So certainly I want to thank you all
18 for our partnership and support as we continue to
19 foster a more diverse and inclusive environment for our
20 customers and certainly those communities we serve in
21 Illinois. Thank you.

22 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you. And our final

1 presenter, David Carter, Aqua Illinois.

2 MR. CARTER: Thank you, Chair Zalewski, ICC
3 Commissioners and ICC staff, representative Delgado,
4 Leader Evans, and special thanks to Jeanine Robinson
5 for all of her help in getting me prepared here today.
6 Good afternoon. I'm David Carter, as she said,
7 president of Aqua Illinois. I'm very honored and
8 pleased to be able to be here this afternoon to speak
9 to the Commission for the first time at this policy
10 session. I'm joined here today virtually by Susan
11 Haindl, senior vice president and chief administrative
12 officer for Essential Utilities, the parent company of
13 Aqua.

14 In my brief two and a half months with
15 Aqua, I've become familiarized with the company's
16 commitment to diversity and inclusion in its workforce
17 as well as to our supplier diversity program. We're
18 committed to partnering with diverse suppliers and
19 continue to identify new diverse suppliers to add to
20 our list of qualified vendors. Next slide.

21 I'll provide a brief overview today of
22 Aqua Illinois and our supplier diversity program

1 results. Just a few words about Aqua. We continue to
2 close in on about a 100,000 connections here in the
3 State of Illinois. We serve a population estimated at
4 approximately 273,000 people. We operate 30 water
5 systems in 17 wastewater systems and provide our
6 services to 70 communities and 13 counties in Illinois.
7 And we do this with an employee base of a 142 employees
8 in Illinois, including those that are located at our
9 national call center in Kankakee. Next.

10 In 2021 we grew our diverse spend by
11 3 and a half percentage points to 19.1 percent from
12 15.5 percent of our total 2021 spend. We increased our
13 reportable spend by approximately \$563,000 to
14 10.4 million, and we increased our women-owned business
15 enterprise spend by almost \$400,000. We also held a
16 Supplier Diversity Workshop in 2021 to assist in the
17 identification and utilization of additional diverse
18 suppliers. We used 25 new diverse suppliers in 2021
19 for a total of 123 diverse supplier firms that we did
20 business with.

21 With regard to our procurement process,
22 we have leadership commitment and accountability from

1 our CEO to enhance our supplier diversity program.
2 Translated to our Illinois operations, we have regular
3 meetings between our corporate supplier diversity team
4 and all Illinois staff with spending authority. Our
5 corporate office has provided a set of advanced tools
6 to allow us to track and monitor realtime performance,
7 and our Illinois staff meets regularly to review our
8 monthly progress and create and discuss plans to
9 continue to build upon our progress.

10 We do conduct regular reviews of all of
11 our vendor relationships, reviewing a 12-month rolling
12 spend for all of our vendors that exceed a threshold of
13 \$50,000 to identify opportunities to solicit bids from
14 diverse vendors as those services are renewed.

15 This slide provides a breakdown of our
16 diverse spend by enterprise type. The first pie chart
17 shows a breakdown of all of our diverse and small
18 business spend originating from Illinois, but it
19 includes out-of-state spending as well. The spend
20 totals about \$10.4 million.

21 The second pie chart illustrates our
22 diverse spend exclusively within Illinois totaling

1 about \$7.9 million. Including small business
2 enterprises, approximately 76 percent of our spend
3 stays within the state of Illinois. If we exclude
4 small businesses, approximately 83 percent of our
5 diverse spend stays within the state.

6 Some of our goals for 2022: Continue
7 to increase diverse spend across professional services
8 and technical services categories; continue to utilize
9 and refine our supplier diversity workflows and
10 dashboard for real-time capturing and reporting of our
11 diverse spend. We use this regularly, you know,
12 internally for our meetings with our team members.
13 While we continue to pursue expansion of our diverse
14 spend overall, we are focused on increasing MBE spend,
15 in particular. Construction is by far and away our
16 largest spend category, and we're working actively to
17 identify more firms within this space.

18 With regard to enhancing our diversity
19 culture, we communicate regularly with our staff
20 regarding the benefits of the program and benefits to
21 Aqua and the benefits to the community at large. And
22 we continue to assist vendors through the supplier

1 diversity certification process. We're on track to
2 continue to grow our diverse spend this year.

3 Some of our challenges and
4 opportunities. We view this as a process, a continuous
5 process where we are able to continue to build out a
6 portfolio of diverse suppliers and solicit bids from
7 them as needed. We maintain a strong list of diverse
8 suppliers and -- that we can draw upon for whatever
9 circumstance we're encountering and whatever our needs
10 might be.

11 From a pricing perspective, we had had
12 some challenges with overpriced diverse suppliers,
13 particularly with regard to engineering services, and
14 we're working very actively to provide more information
15 to them and to help them through the process to submit
16 more competitive bids and proposals.

17 And that's really it, Jeanine. Thanks.

18 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you. And now we will open
19 it up for questions or comments from the commissioners.

20 COMMISSIONER KIMBREL: I can ask a question.
21 I kind of asked this already of Mr. Hinton and
22 Mr. Dallas. But for Mr. Quiniones and Singh and

1 Carter, we've always -- this is for all the utilities
2 here. We'd obviously like to see your Illinois diverse
3 spend continue to increase as a percentage of your
4 total spend, but if you could touch upon your efforts
5 and challenges here and how you can increase this
6 percentage, we'd appreciate hearing that.

7 MR. SINGH: Thank you for the question. I think
8 really what we're focusing on is doing some analytics
9 around the categories of spend and where we're lacking
10 and try to find out what we can really do to kind of
11 move the ball forward, whether it's mentorship,
12 providing access, and certainly helping, as some of my
13 colleagues talked about, you know, programatically
14 developing those vendors to start small and then move
15 their way and increase that spend over time.

16 MR. QUINIONES: And up at ComEd, I'm pleased to
17 report that we have 71 percent of our spend in
18 Illinois-based companies, which is a growth of
19 5 percent. So our goal is to continue that trend to
20 increase our spend overall but also to increase the
21 spend in our state, continue that progress. We are
22 pleased that we have been successful so far.

1 MS. ROBINSON: This question is for ComEd and
2 Peoples Gas. With your mentorship programs -- your
3 mentorship and other programs that you have in place,
4 how do you determine which companies will participate?

5 MR. QUINIONES: Yeah. I'll begin. At ComEd, we
6 have a very robust mentorship program where we select a
7 subset of our diverse suppliers and train them how to
8 do business with us. We do a request for information
9 so we have set of qualifications to select that subset
10 of diverse suppliers. They then go through our
11 training program to do two things, really, to increase
12 the capacity of work that they can do with us but also
13 to make sure that they know the processes, the focus on
14 safety, how to execute work that are important to ComEd
15 as we go forward.

16 MR. HINTON: Yeah. Then, at Peoples Gas and
17 North Shore Gas, it's a combination of working with
18 diverse firms that are already affiliated and in our
19 system as well as partnering with external groups such
20 as Chicago Five Ford and looking at new opportunities
21 for vendors and where it makes sense to have them
22 partner with some of our prime suppliers.

1 CHAIR ZALEWSKI: Can I ask you a quick question?
2 This might be more towards Justin because it's about
3 IUBDC and the database, just a report on how the
4 database is coming along and how effective it's been.
5 We -- I remember hearing about it when it was going to
6 be kicked off a couple of years ago, if I have my
7 timing correct. So I'd love to hear the good, the bad,
8 and the ugly about the database.

9 MR. LADNER: You're referring to kind of the
10 Supplier Registration Mapping Tool, Chair, I think.

11 CHAIR ZALEWSKI: I'm not sure what it's titled,
12 but it's the database that's shared by the
13 organization.

14 MR. LADNER: Yeah.

15 CHAIR ZALEWSKI: Right? It was created by and it
16 was born out of the organization.

17 MR. LADNER: Yeah, that's -- we're talking about
18 the same thing. And it's funny you mentioned that
19 because that was the subject of some of the discussion
20 at our board meeting that we had before this.

21 And you're right. The good, bad, the
22 ugly, we had a real candid conversation with our

1 committees around has that tool outlived its usefulness
2 and has it not kept up with the evolution of the IUBDC
3 and by virtue of that, the evolution of the IUBDC, all
4 of our companies, and does that tool need to be
5 reconfigured to meet the needs that I think a lot of us
6 have conveyed here today?

7 So we are taking a prioritized look at
8 what that tool does, and we're taking a lot of the
9 feedback from each of our companies in terms of what do
10 we need to go to this second phase, if you will, of
11 growth. And one of the things that came up was
12 opportunities for Tier 2s to really go somewhere to
13 find Tier -- sorry, Tier 1s to go find Tier 2s because
14 we've talked about our contract requirements.

15 So there's a lot of opportunity to
16 improve that tool and then the administration of it.
17 And I would say that that's if not the one of the top
18 priorities for the IUBDC toward the end of this year
19 and going into '23.

20 CHAIR ZALEWSKI: Thank you. And I'm not
21 suggesting there's -- there doesn't have to be more
22 questions, but I just want to take a quick opportunity

1 to thank the presidents and CEOs for being here in
2 person. It's really important to the Commission. It
3 elevates the conversation. So thank you for taking the
4 time out to do that. Thank you to Aqua for being here
5 voluntarily. I think that speaks a lot to the company
6 as well -- the voluntarily commitment of reporting to
7 us.

8 So I just want to just before we get
9 to -- we break away -- and I also wanted to know -- I
10 know we have a second panel, and I know everyone is
11 very busy, so if -- you know, who can stay and who
12 can't. So I wanted to make sure I said that in person.
13 So thank you for being here.

14 MS. ROBINSON: Some -- I have a question for
15 ComEd, and I can't remember who else Commissioner
16 Carrigan asked. It might have been Justin who may have
17 answered already, but can either Gil or someone give us
18 more detail in regards to your cybersecurity concerns
19 and what steps you're taking to address those?

20 MR. QUINIONES: Yeah. Third-party risk is a --
21 cyber risk is something that we take very, very
22 seriously. As you know, as utilities, we have federal

1 requirements which really provides as a floor in terms
2 of cybersecurity. So on the one hand, we really are
3 focused on protecting our systems, protecting
4 information of our customers. But at the same time, we
5 want to balance it so that it's not a barrier for
6 diverse suppliers to do business with us as we impose
7 some of those requirements.

8 So it's a balancing act. It requires
9 close collaboration. It requires really hand-in-hand
10 working with our diverse suppliers to make sure that
11 they can continue to do the robust business that
12 they've been doing with us at ComEd while at the same
13 time we are addressing cybersecurity requirements.

14 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you. I know that there are
15 various challenges in regards to certain businesses or
16 certain diverse businesses becoming -- having the
17 ability to obtain a contract. What are some of the
18 characteristics of some of your more successful
19 businesses that you've partnered with? Anybody can
20 answer that.

21 MR. QUINIONES: I can start. Those that can
22 align with the work plan that we're putting together on

1 a year-by-year basis and, you know, features or
2 attributes such as safety or the execution of work,
3 those are the ones that really we see flourish in our
4 system. We do a lot of mentoring, as I've mentioned
5 before, so that's one. Two, we're asking our Tier 1
6 suppliers to mentor the smaller and medium size diverse
7 suppliers so that they can do more business not only
8 directly with us but with our Tier 1 suppliers as
9 subcontractors.

10 And now we're looking at certain issues
11 such as insurance, and can we simplify insurance
12 structures and bonding structures so that, again, they
13 can increase their capacity to do more work with us?
14 Owner, for example -- one example of that is
15 owner-controlled insurance program. So we're looking
16 at some wrap-around services to enable more contractors
17 to take on more work with ComEd.

18 MR. DALLAS: I can also add to that. And, you
19 know, you really hit on some -- the major points there.
20 And I'll tell you, for us, one of the things when it
21 comes to working with local partners -- for instance,
22 we're looking for opportunities to work with First

1 Women's Bank. So that's going to be -- that's
2 headquartered here in Illinois. You know, they're
3 looking at supporting entrepreneurs, innovators, and
4 obviously moms, daughters. Great, great initiative.
5 Great purpose.

6 And we work closely with a lot of our
7 executives as well. We want to partner with suppliers
8 or contractors, vendors that really want to understand
9 they've got barriers to entering this space. We know
10 it's very complicated. So when you're looking at
11 shortening their net payment terms, looking at their
12 insurance requirements, assisting them with capital,
13 it's all the barriers we're hearing, the challenges
14 they're facing, and figuring out ways to help them
15 figure that out.

16 And so -- and then, can we do things,
17 make adjustments in our requirements so that they have
18 that opportunity, working with the Tier 1 companies
19 making sure they understand and they're doing the same
20 thing, holding them accountable. But we're also
21 saying -- we're not just saying, "Go do it. We want
22 you to work with us because of what you learned." We

1 learn as well.

2 You know, many of our supporters are --
3 our vendors here, they're here today with us, watching,
4 listening. We're much stronger now as a result of
5 hearing their voice. But those barriers are the
6 biggest challenges. We have to listen and figure it
7 out. It's not easy. There's no easy pass. Again, the
8 numbers will continue to fluctuate. But as they
9 fluctuate, our purpose, our intent must remain. We
10 must still to make -- continue to make investments
11 because those investments will pay returns in the
12 future.

13 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you.

14 MR. LADNER: If I --

15 MS. ROBINSON: Oh, sorry.

16 MR. LADNER: If I could just add? And I'll be
17 brief because the gentleman before me, he really hit a
18 lot of the key characteristics. It's hard work growing
19 this area. For us to do that, it's got to be a
20 partnership. And we found some local vendors --
21 Stephen Brock, Supplied Industrial Solutions, as an
22 example, that started out as a pipe supply partner with

1 us. Through active listening, learning about business,
2 us learning his capabilities and where he wants to go,
3 alignment on values, and true constructive partnership,
4 he's now getting into general contracting.

5 And we're doing that in a responsible
6 dosage manner where he partners with a mentor who's got
7 experience to then grow his business and go from just
8 being a supplier to also a supplier and general
9 contractor. And we've got an even stronger partner to
10 help us as we grow our business in water and
11 wastewater. To do that, though, it's got to be a
12 foundation of just trust and willingness to do some
13 hard work.

14 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you. And now, if we don't
15 have any more comments or questions at this point, we
16 are on schedule to take a break. We will return in
17 approximately ten minutes for the second portion of our
18 policy session. Thank you.

19 MR. QUINIONES: Thank you.

20 MR. DALLAS: Thank you.

21 MS. ROBINSON: Welcome back to ICC's annual
22 Supplier Diversity Policy Session. We have completed

1 our first half which was very enlightening. Now we
2 will begin the second portion of the session,
3 Professional Services Diversity Expansion.

4 We speak a lot about supplier
5 diversity. However, suppliers diversity, which are the
6 contractors, these are -- but there are other areas for
7 diversity, which is professional services.

8 Professional services areas are acknowledged-based
9 organizations that provide highly specialized services
10 across many industries.

11 These businesses generally require
12 professional licensure and/or degrees in the art and
13 sciences. Some of the professional services categories
14 are legal services, financial services, human
15 resources, IT engineering and technical services,
16 communications, marketing, management, consulting.

17 With that being said, we have invited
18 some of the executives from the utility companies and
19 parent companies to discuss challenges, concerns,
20 strategies to increase diversity within the
21 professional services realm. In effort to stay in the
22 allotted time, we're going to time our answers. We

1 have people in person, and we have some online. So if
2 you guys can take a second and just introduce
3 yourselves so that we all know who's here, and we'll
4 start with the people who are present in front of us --
5 your name and your company and your role. Thank you.

6 MR. RIPPIE: Good afternoon, Chair,
7 Commissioners. I'm Glenn Rippie. I am a senior vice
8 president and general counsel of ComEd.

9 MS. LITTLETON: Good afternoon. I'm Gayle
10 Littleton. I'm the executive vice president and
11 general counsel of Exelon.

12 MR. BROWN: Hi, everybody. I'm Ryan Brown. I'm
13 the corporate treasurer of Exelon.

14 MS. MULROY: Good afternoon. I'm Molly Mulroy.
15 I'm chief administrative officer for WEC Energy Group.

16 MS. REESE: Good afternoon. Thank you for having
17 us. I'm Beth Reese, and I'm the executive vice
18 president of Shared Services with Southern Company.

19 MR. GALLEGOS: Hi. I'm Jim Gallegos. I'm with
20 American Water. I'm the executive vice president and
21 general counsel, and I'm out of Camden.

22 MS. ROBINSON: And now we'll start with our

1 participants who are online. If you can introduce
2 yourselves.

3 MS. HAINDL: Hi. Good afternoon. My name is Sue
4 Haindl. I'm the chief administrative officer of
5 Essential Utilities and also affiliated with Aqua and
6 Peoples Gas. Thank you.

7 MR. LEE: Good afternoon. I'm Steve Lee, vice
8 president and deputy general counsel here at Ameren
9 Corporation.

10 MR. SAGEL: I'm Darryl Sagel, vice president and
11 treasurer at Ameren Corp.

12 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you for your introductions.
13 And now we will have a discussion. It's going to be
14 more of a question and answer, not specific, and we'll
15 just go forward. If any of the commissioners would
16 like to start with the questions?

17 COMMISSIONER MCCABE: Can you speak to the
18 relationship between the Illinois-based companies and
19 the corporate parent and that kind of dynamics there
20 when you approach professional services?

21 MR. GALLEGOS: Sure. I can start. With regard
22 to that, the corporate level, we oversee what's being

1 done in the states. The states have a lot of latitude
2 with regard to what they're doing. Again, corporately,
3 for example, in this area in the lot -- the legal
4 department, what we'll do is we'll be looking at are we
5 always going to the same providers, are we really
6 questioning ourselves?

7 So for example, with employment, we
8 will not go forward with an interview unless we have a
9 diverse panel. What we try to do is with legal
10 matters, we try to make sure that we're asking those
11 same questions. So for example, if there's a new
12 matter that comes in, we look at what would we -- who
13 would we staff up with, what type of firms? And we are
14 always questioning ourselves with regard to is there
15 someone diverse out there?

16 If there's a specialty and there's not,
17 we'll go to bar associations to ask those questions.
18 But again, we'll create processes. At the corporate
19 level, we'll offer them to the states, but the states
20 really have a lot of the say in whether or not they
21 follow them or not.

22 MS. REESE: Let's say our answer is a little bit

1 more complicated. At Southern Company, we basically
2 have two levels of parents for Southern Company Gas.
3 We have a parent level for Southern Company, and then
4 there's a parent level at Southern Company Gas that
5 oversees the gas company at Nicor Gas.

6 But generally, we're all focused on --
7 Wendell referred to it as our move to equity focus,
8 which includes DE&I for suppliers as well as our
9 employees and really our communities to make sure that
10 we're living by our value of making sure that we
11 reflect the communities that we serve. So we put
12 targets that are at both levels, parent levels, and we
13 work with our -- with Nicor Gas, in this case, our
14 subsidiaries, to determine what makes sense for them
15 and the environment that they're working in.

16 And so we do try. You know, we are
17 working with professional services at both parent
18 levels, if you will, and at the state level, and we are
19 making sure that we're listening to what's going on in
20 our states to make sure our parent is reflecting that
21 as well as that we are providing the services down from
22 the parent.

1 So for example, in our financing world,
2 we're -- we have been very deliberate and intentional
3 over the past several years of engaging with Illinois
4 firms to help us in financing even if they're not
5 helping with Nicor Gas financings. So they're helping
6 with Southern Company financings to be able to make
7 sure that we're creating opportunities for
8 Illinois-based diverse firms if they don't have the
9 opportunity to do that directly for Nicor Gas.

10 COMMISSIONER KIMBREL: Can I just ask of --

11 MS. ROBINSON: Sure. Oh, I'm sorry. I
12 thought -- Molly, you were going to answer. No, if
13 you're still answering Commissioner McCabe's question.
14 Molly?

15 MS. MULROY: So at the -- sorry. Sorry for the
16 confusion. So at the WEC Energy Group, so supplier
17 diversity and supply chain are, you know, serving all
18 of our utilities. But when it comes to, you know, our
19 individual utilities like Peoples Gas, you know, we are
20 looking and working with diverse firm specifically, you
21 know, by and in each state. We've set goals and
22 targets within each of the states. And so our intent

1 is really to have focus working with local partners to
2 help fulfill some of those opportunities, you know,
3 whether that be on contracts, whether that be on
4 mentorship and development.

5 You know, certainly across all of those
6 from a -- you know, from a human resources perspective,
7 certainly, you know, DE&I is a focus of the company as
8 we look at, you know, opportunities for employment, as
9 we look at opportunities for higher -- you know, again,
10 with the goal to reflect the communities that we serve.

11 MR. BROWN: Maybe I'll speak specifically to my
12 role within Exelon. So I'm -- again, I'm the corporate
13 treasurer, so I lead -- I oversee the bank
14 relationships that we have. And we have a centralized
15 treasury organization within Exelon. It serves all of
16 our operating companies.

17 But we're partnering with each of our
18 operating -- six operating companies, including ComEd
19 to support, you know, their inclusion of diverse firms,
20 diverse banks on all of their activities. We've had --
21 from a financing perspective, we've included diverse
22 firms on all of our financing since 2007 and the

1 majority of our financing since 2003.

2 Our centralized treasury organization
3 is facilitating the process of the relationships with
4 the diverse banking partners. But then, we're --
5 again, we're partnering with each of the operating
6 companies to incorporate them into their, you know,
7 larger DE&I goals but then also to support their
8 initiatives going forward.

9 MS. LITTLETON: Yeah. And I'll speak to the
10 Exelon Legal Department. So the way that we are
11 structured, our legal department includes both the
12 general -- all the general counsels for each of the
13 utilities, including ComEd, and then also the Shared
14 Services Corporate Organization.

15 So to your direct question in terms of
16 how we think about legal spend, you know, diversity
17 equity inclusion is a huge focus for us. It has been
18 for many years, not just since May of 2020. We focus a
19 significant amount of our time and effort on trying to
20 identify a diverse spend to identify minority- and
21 women-owned law firms for us to work with.

22 We work to infiltrate the entire

1 culture with that type of value, and we look at how
2 we're spending each of our dollars every year on those
3 corporate matters. But -- and we -- I'll let Glenn
4 speak to how it works for ComEd, but we focus on
5 exactly how we're spending those dollars. And we
6 expect out of each of the utilities, since they report
7 in through legal, to also have that very same focus.

8 And as you will hear, I think, from
9 ComEd today and from Exelon, that's a real focus for
10 both of us. So we instill that value at the corporate
11 level. It infiltrates down into the utilities, and
12 then we work to gauge our metrics on that and to
13 improve it each year.

14 MR. RIPPPIE: And just to add for ComEd the
15 operating company, it -- and without repeating anything
16 that Gayle said, we are -- it manifests itself in a
17 triple focus. We focus on identifying, working with,
18 and growing our relationships with MV and WBE firms.
19 We focus on -- intensely on contracting and developing
20 diverse attorneys even in the large sometimes national
21 or international majority on firms with which we work.

22 And because a lot of the work that

1 comes out of the operating company, ComEd is highly
2 technical and has a long experience journey. We focus
3 on development. We look at how people progress during
4 their career at all their law firms, be they
5 minority-owned or majority-owned so that diverse
6 lawyers can advance.

7 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER KIMBREL: Were there folks online
9 that wanted to --

10 MS. ROBINSON: Oh, sorry.

11 COMMISSIONER KIMBREL: -- answer the question?

12 MS. HAINDL: Yeah. Hi, this is Sue Haindl from
13 Essential. So the categories that were mentioned
14 earlier, like engineering, that is done at the local
15 level. So we have ten states, and the engineering
16 decisions are done at the state level. Whereas in
17 legal, we would partner with our states.

18 And each one of these functional
19 categories that you named, all are tied to a functional
20 owner. Again, engineering is within our state's
21 jurisdiction and control. But with finance, legal, HR,
22 IT, comms, there's a hybrid of corporate and state

1 operating level. But again, it is a partnership
2 because we are very invested to grow this, our supplier
3 diversity.

4 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you, Susan. Steve?

5 MR. LEE: Yeah. Thanks. And for Ameren, from a
6 legal perspective, I'll just echo what a lot of my
7 colleagues in the room have probably already said. We
8 manage this from a centralized area, but we have two
9 main operating companies in Missouri and Illinois, and
10 we look for law firms -- we look to partner with law
11 firms in the communities that we operate in, and we
12 look to grow our diverse spend in those communities.

13 So we have identified a panel of firms
14 in each of the jurisdictions that we operate in and
15 including, you know, Illinois, including Chicago, but
16 we don't have any exclusivity with how we use those
17 firms.

18 So for example, we have a set of panel
19 firms minority, you know, diverse-owned firms that are
20 based in Chicago. And yes, they do a fair bit of work
21 in Illinois, but we don't restrict our engagement with
22 those firms in Illinois. In fact, we have some of

1 those Chicago-based firms doing work in Missouri and
2 vice versa. All things, you know, being said, we're
3 just interested in growing our whole diverse spend pie
4 across kind of all the channels that we operate in. So
5 we don't manage it in any kind of particular, you know,
6 jurisdictional way.

7 But some of the things that we do
8 across our panels are we look for opportunities to
9 develop capability with those firms. We look to
10 identify diverse-owned firms. We look to identify
11 firms that have capabilities that are close to what
12 we're looking at. And kind of to further what Leader
13 Evans said in the prior session, we're not just looking
14 for firms that have the exact capability that we need,
15 but we're looking at firms that have the ability to
16 grow into kind of our needs and to look to develop
17 their capabilities in that space to be able to grow our
18 overall diverse spend.

19 And then the other thing that we do is
20 with all of our firms, including our majority-own
21 firms, we look to manage diverse timekeeper
22 contributions both in terms of hours and dollars spent.

1 And so we performance manage all of our firms in terms
2 of the lawyers that they bring to our matters in terms
3 of growing, you know, all of the -- growing diverse
4 participation at all different levels associated up
5 through partner.

6 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you, Steve. Commissioner
7 Kimbrel.

8 COMMISSIONER KIMBREL: Yeah. I'm sorry. I got a
9 little too excited. Based on the amount allocated from
10 the parent company for professional services, is there
11 a percentage or a target goal for diverse spend?

12 MS. REESE: We have an overall target for the
13 entire company of 30 percent. So Nicor Gas is
14 significantly exceeding that in what you saw presented
15 today, but there are definitely opportunities for us to
16 continue to grow that in the professional services
17 area, but we do have it, an overall target.

18 MS. LITTLETON: Yeah. I'm going to speak again
19 from a legal department perspective. We have a goal to
20 grow our spend generally. So let me talk a little bit
21 about -- we have sort of three categories that I can
22 talk to you about in terms of our metrics. But, you

1 know, we look -- we spent a considerable amount of
2 money with majority-owned firms for the matters that we
3 have on the corporate level. They're very large
4 matters. They're very complex matters. And with those
5 majority-owned firms, though, we are relentlessly
6 focused on building our diverse spend with them.

7 So we do that in a few ways. We meet
8 with them every year to discuss what they're doing on
9 the diversity side of the house for their law firm.
10 What we're doing on our own matters, getting all of the
11 metrics from them in terms of how -- what diverse
12 attorneys are working on matters, explaining our own
13 expectations about that. We require them to provide
14 those metrics to us so that we can gauge where we are
15 with them on each of our matters.

16 And then, we also have something called
17 the Exelon Diversity Honor Roll for those large spend
18 law firms that are majority firms which basically says
19 that if they are -- as long as our matters have at
20 least 15 percent lawyers of color, 35 percent women,
21 then they can make our honor roll. With that comes
22 publicity from us.

1 Now, those numbers, we are hoping to
2 continue to move those up in terms of being on the
3 honor roll. But when you -- we look at our diverse
4 spend on those majority firms, which would be those
5 firms, probably 12 firms that we spend the most money
6 with, we have a -- 46 percent of that spend is on
7 diverse attorneys. So again, I think we're proud of
8 where we are with that and where those dollars are
9 being spent.

10 We are also very much focused on
11 building the bench of our minority- and women-owned law
12 firms. So we've got an additional \$2.4 million spent
13 with those firms. And we're continuing to work to
14 build the number of firms that we're working with and
15 also to build the amount of work that we're able to
16 give to those firms. So that's how we're approaching
17 that.

18 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you. Steve?

19 MR. LEE: Yeah. Thank you, Chair.

20 MS. ROBINSON: Susan.

21 MR. LEE: Oh, we -- at Ameren, we have kind of
22 goals on two levels. One is we want to increase the

1 spend with diverse-owned companies, certified
2 diverse-owned firms. And that goal last year was
3 15 percent of our total annual legal spend. This is in
4 the -- all in the legal area, and last year we exceeded
5 that. We're at 17 percent, and this year we're
6 tracking actually 24 percent. So we're probably going
7 to be looking to, you know, raise that level, but
8 that's one level.

9 And then, the other is we are looking
10 to expand, as I mentioned before, challenge all of our
11 firms to increase timekeeper diversity across all
12 levels. And we measure timekeeper statistics. We ask
13 all firms to submit timekeeper kind of characteristics
14 in terms of gender, ethnicity, LGBTQ, disability, and
15 veteran statuses. I will say not all firms participate
16 in that. We ask them to submit that data, and
17 sometimes they decline. But to the extent that they
18 submit that data, we take that data in and we manage
19 it, measure it every year, and we provide feedback
20 that's catered to each firm.

21 And so we don't have a general kind of
22 goal, but it really runs the gamut between -- you know,

1 some majority firms have very low percentages in that
2 area, and we challenge them year on year to improve.
3 And obviously, with -- some of our particular
4 diverse-owned firms have higher levels, but we
5 challenge them to increase their levels year on year as
6 well.

7 MS. HAINDL: So for --

8 MS. ROBINSON: Yeah. Yeah.

9 MS. HAINDL: Thank you. So for Essential, we
10 established in 2021 a multi-year goal to have
11 15 percent certified diverse spend by 2024. And, you
12 know, we're well on our way to achieve that. We were
13 at 8.3 on -- in 2020, 10.9 last year, and our goal was
14 12 percent. We're -- you know, we're on track to
15 exceed that.

16 So what we did, though, in order to
17 look at that a little bit more closely across our
18 organization, we established goals at the state level
19 and the functional level or what I call functional.
20 It's professional or, you know, non-state level, what
21 we identified as such.

22 So what we did was we took every

1 supplier that we have in our organization and
2 classified them so we could get that data daily so Dave
3 and his team can look at Illinois and get very good
4 clarity on what the statistics are for Illinois, for
5 instance, but that also applies to all of our other
6 functional areas from, you know, legal to
7 communications, HR, IT, et cetera.

8 And it really helps our leaders to be
9 focused on this and helps them to come up with -- when
10 they work with myself and our other team members to
11 focus on the strategy of how we can grow and develop
12 that. So it's helped our organization a lot to move
13 forward.

14 CHAIR ZALEWSKI: Jeanine, I have a question if --
15 is there someone else who wanted to speak at this
16 point? I don't want to cut anybody off.

17 MS. ROBINSON: Ryan, do you have a response?

18 MR. BROWN: Yeah. I think Gayle's remarks
19 overall for Exelon, you know, covered the way we
20 approach it. But I'd say specific to the way we engage
21 our banking partners, I'd say, we don't have -- it
22 varies year over year based on the activities that we

1 have with the bank support. So from a dollar
2 perspective, we don't necessarily have a target. But
3 to Gayle's point, say, similar, we're always pushing
4 ourselves to look at new ways to expand the programs
5 and creative ways to do it.

6 So maybe to -- I'll just say the bread
7 and butter of what we do and we've been doing, again,
8 since 2001 is including diverse firms on our financing
9 deals. So we've had over -- you know, I think it's
10 approximately 17 million in fees that have been paid to
11 diverse firms since 2001 supporting almost 50 billion
12 in capital raise.

13 They typically serve as co-managers on
14 our deals. And what they do there is they underwrite a
15 portion of the deal. They support the deal by
16 marketing and selling to investor pockets that are
17 typically accessed by the -- some of the larger banks
18 that we deal with. And they bring just a unique
19 perspective of diverse, you know, thought process both
20 inside a deal and outside of a deal. We're in constant
21 communication through the year. That's our bread and
22 butter. We continue to do that consistently. We've

1 included banks on all of our financings since 2007.

2 Ways we've moved past that, one thing
3 we're really proud of is our Community Minority
4 Facility. So we have approximately 20-plus banks
5 across our jurisdictions. It's -- about half of them,
6 I think, are actually Illinois-based banks where what
7 we have is we have a credit facility or a line of
8 credit with those banks. So it's a benefit tax law in
9 that we get additional source of liquidity.

10 It's -- and it's a big benefit to those
11 smaller, you know, community and minority-owned banks
12 and that not only do they earn fees based on, you know,
13 their line of credit served to us, they get their
14 reputational benefit of strategic partnership with
15 Exelon. And then we also include deposits and CDs with
16 those banks so that they could take that cash and
17 redeploy it in their local -- you know, each in their
18 local neighborhoods in our communities.

19 The other one -- I just want to
20 highlight, one other creative way we expanded it is
21 this year in May we launched a Racial Equity Capital
22 Fund, and this is a \$36 million investment by Exelon.

1 It's funded by Exelon. It created an investment fund
2 that's managed by Rock Creek which is a minority-owned
3 firm. And what they will do with that fund, it's going
4 to be an evergreen fund that will provide loans and
5 equity funding to minority-owned and community small
6 businesses in the jurisdictions we work in.

7 So, you know, I get -- long story
8 short, it depends year-to-year on how much that relates
9 to a dollar-based spend, but we're always looking for
10 creative ways to expand the cost.

11 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you.

12 CHAIR ZALEWSKI: Yeah. Thank you for being here
13 today. I kind of wanted to flip the conversation on
14 its head. I think we have some suppliers listening in.
15 We have some suppliers in the room. And so I want to
16 take it from their perspective.

17 So let's say that there is a newly
18 minted engineering law or finance minority and
19 women-owned, veteran-owned business. And what are tips
20 that you can provide to them? What is the way to
21 increase the opportunity for them to engage with your
22 entity? What are the best next steps or a variety of

1 steps they can take to maximize their chances of
2 getting the business?

3 MS. MULROY: I can speak on that one. So I think
4 first and foremost is obviously, you know, through
5 matchmaking and through, you know, really our community
6 outreach, making sure that we know when folks are
7 developing new businesses. I think, you know, knowing
8 folks is key first and foremost.

9 I think the other thing is, you know,
10 in that, how do we work together to develop them;
11 right? So if they're brand new, you know, obviously
12 there's, you know, complexities that may come with a
13 process. So how do we as leaders set forth
14 expectations among some of our other suppliers in terms
15 of mentorship?

16 How do we think about how we structure
17 responses on RFPs to be inclusive of newer firms, and
18 how do we really encourage them as part of our overall
19 business relationship? Because we -- many are
20 recurring, to be very thoughtful about, you know, how
21 they continue to develop diverse businesses, you know,
22 minority-owned businesses throughout the course of, you

1 know, our relationship and really not just for us but
2 honestly with, you know, several of their other
3 customers as well. Obviously, this is a big focus for
4 many.

5 MR. GALLEGOS: What we ended up doing was we had
6 a supply chain event, the national supply chain event
7 back in New Jersey, where the suppliers -- diverse
8 suppliers could come together. They could talk to us
9 about what is holding us back, what's holding them
10 back, how can we partner more effectively together.
11 And we felt it was very effective in the collaboration
12 and trying to meet each other and seeing where those
13 hurdles that you may not see actually exist. In fact,
14 I was talking to one of the suppliers today, and he was
15 talking about how beneficial it was.

16 MS. REESE: Yeah. I think my colleagues on the
17 panel have answered it in that it's a relationship.
18 It's understanding how to get into the door, and that
19 is hard to find. And a representative earlier talked
20 about the cement door. So sometimes it's hard to find
21 that door. And we have to continue to do the community
22 events. We've -- we held one in Birmingham recently

1 for all of Southern Company to invite suppliers in, and
2 that worked and brought many different leaders from
3 across the company in to be able to meet people. And
4 then it's just listening to what problems can they
5 solve and what problems do we need to solve.

6 I would say the other thing that we've
7 done a really good job of over the past -- feels like
8 ten years -- at Nicor Gas about really focusing on
9 supplier diversity is that we've learned how to do it
10 in the construction area and taking those lessons
11 learned and applying them to other areas. I think with
12 the technology, space is another opportunity to really
13 leverage Tier 2 spend, and I think that's a frontier
14 that we've really got to focus on, and we are, but
15 that's an opportunity for us.

16 MS. LITTLETON: For Exelon, I think I concur with
17 everything that my fellow panelists have said on that.
18 But I think from a law firm perspective, especially for
19 minority- and women-owned law firms that may be
20 smaller, you know, one of -- in the advice that you
21 asked, you know, one of the things that it may be
22 helpful for them to consider are organizations.

1 So at Exelon, we are very involved in
2 NAMWOLF, which is the National Association of Minority
3 & Women Owned Law Firms, we are routinely at
4 conferences. We are out there looking to meet those
5 firms and get exposed to them. So those types of
6 organizations can be very helpful for the exposure
7 because we're actively looking at places like that.

8 There's an organization called the
9 Legal Counsel for Legal Diversity, LCLD, that we're a
10 part of as well. There are programs there like the
11 Pathfinder Program and the Fellows Program for, you
12 know, high potential diverse lawyers that are early in
13 career or mid career. Those are all places that we
14 look to build relationships.

15 And, you know, of course it will be
16 helpful to meet and get to know people just from
17 networking events and the like, but organizations like
18 that can help those firms not just with Exelon but also
19 with other companies as well that could help them grow
20 and develop the expertise that may help them, you know,
21 not just get matters with us but even get additional
22 matters as they grow in the future from the work that

1 they do for other clients.

2 I guess the last thing I'll also say on
3 that is that I do think it's also important that from
4 an in-house perspective, we reflect that back. So we
5 are looking to build our diverse lawyers and legal
6 professionals in our own department. We can't go out
7 there and say that we're focused on diversity equity
8 and inclusion unless we're doing it ourselves.

9 And so I think the more that we are
10 bringing diverse lawyers into our organization, the
11 easier it will be to kind of continue to build -- you
12 know, to build the -- you know, the diverse law firms
13 that help to support us as well. So it's a partnership
14 that we're looking to build there.

15 MS. ROBINSON: Susan.

16 MS. HAINDL: Thank you. I think a lot of great
17 things have been said. I mean, it's really just
18 building those relationships and letting us know that
19 they're available in the community. I mean, we have
20 some proactive events that we have in different -- in
21 our states and in different corporate areas. But, you
22 know, if there is a supplier, I mean, we -- I mean,

1 what Dave has in his report, all those areas, we have
2 needs, and we'd love to hear from any supplier. You
3 know, we'd love to see if we can develop those
4 relationships and, you know, eventually just do
5 business with them.

6 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you. Sorry. I have a
7 question. When retaining and working with new
8 professional service providers, is there a periodic
9 feedback that facilitates contract renewals in the
10 future and best services during the contract period?
11 Did I say that right? Oh, yeah. Is there a periodic
12 feedback that facilitates contract renewals in the
13 future and best services during the contract period?

14 MS. REESE: I can't say that we have a formal
15 program on that. I -- what I would say is that any of
16 us who use professional services are constantly giving
17 feedback or not doing a good job managing them. So
18 it's how do we give feedback to grow? I think all of
19 us have opportunities within our companies beyond just
20 the operating company here in this state to give
21 feedback and to give opportunities to the diverse
22 firms. And that just requires us to get feedback on

1 what are they doing well, what are they not doing well,
2 just like we would any other supplier.

3 MS. MULROY: I would agree with all of those
4 comments. I think the other key is also to be getting
5 feedback from our suppliers about how it is to work
6 with us. So what are some of the barriers that they
7 may be facing to success? What may be, you know, some
8 of the areas where they feel they need to grow that we
9 can help them? So I think -- you know, in the spirit
10 of overall success, I think that exchange is crucial.

11 MR. RIPPPIE: Let me just add that as those
12 relationships mature and as we get more experience
13 working with vendors, we can support particularly
14 smaller diverse MWEs and WBEs by entering into
15 multitask contracts, entering into annual contracts or
16 multicase contracts in the case of legal work.

17 We found that to be an increasingly
18 successful tool. In the last year, three of our five
19 multicase contracts are with diverse firms, and we
20 expect that that trend will increase at the ComEd
21 operating level in the future.

22 If I can just go retrograde to one last

1 question. For local law firms, I'd also encourage you
2 to get involved in the local energy groups, get
3 involved in Hispanics in Energy, Blacks and Green,
4 Women's Energy Forum. It's a great place to meet what
5 we believe is an increasingly diverse group of lawyers
6 inside at ComEd and build relationships that can lead
7 to two-way benefits and greater work. Thanks.

8 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you. Steve has his hand up.

9 MR. LEE: Yeah. Thank you, Director. So we do
10 have an annual feedback program at Ameren where we put
11 through kind of a survey across our legal department to
12 analyze performance of all of our firms, and then we
13 feed that back on an annual basis. And we measure
14 things like responsiveness, service levels,
15 administrative support, all kinds of things. And we do
16 that, like I said, on an annual basis.

17 So firms will get that, but what I
18 would add for diverse-owned firms is -- and what I told
19 all of our firms that we work with is don't wait for
20 that necessarily. Come back to us and ask us for
21 feedback. Tell us what is going on and ask us, you
22 know, how you're doing so that you can get that

1 feedback in a more contemporaneous way and so you can
2 improve and address issues.

3 And maybe it's a bit on -- to the prior
4 question in terms of what suppliers can do, sometimes
5 we won't know the barriers that you may be facing as a
6 supplier. I'll give you one example. We've had
7 suppliers that have had trouble with our e-billing
8 system, for example. And while a lot of large law
9 firms are used to having e-billing programs that have
10 infrastructure to support that, some smaller firms
11 don't.

12 But what we were seeing was some firms
13 were slow in submitting their invoices. And they were
14 just slow, and we couldn't figure out why. And it
15 turns out they just -- they didn't know how to navigate
16 our e-billing system. They didn't have the experience.
17 And we wouldn't have known that unless we asked.

18 So it's things like that where we can
19 help you kind of help your own performance if you just
20 ask and stay connected. So the moral here for us is,
21 you know, we do provide the feedback, but you should
22 also ask for that feedback as you go.

1 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you, Steve. I have another
2 question. In regards to financial institutions, what
3 is the average participation for an MWVBE company in
4 the issuance of bond debt? And also, have you thought
5 about how are you looking to increase the number of
6 allocations to minority, women, veteran financial
7 institutions with leading roles on your issuance of
8 debt on bond financings?

9 MR. BROWN: Yeah, I can start that. For Exelon,
10 the typical -- I talked about this before, but the
11 typical deal that we have and every deal that we have,
12 we have maybe, let's say, three to four diversity banks
13 on the deal. And again, the role they serve is
14 typically a comanager role, and they are -- underwrite
15 a portion of the deal. They help market the deal, and
16 then they provide insight through the deal.

17 So it's incredibly beneficial from us
18 to get a diverse perspective on each deal, and it's
19 beneficial for those teams. And also, the fact that
20 we're involved in the selling process and we allocate
21 bonds to their investors helps grow their business.

22 Beyond that, our banks have served also

1 in strategic advisory roles on certain projects.
2 Specifically, you know, Exelon's a story of mergers and
3 acquisitions. We've had three big evolutions. Well,
4 more that, but recently, three big evolutions in our
5 company: the merger with Constellation in 2011, merger
6 with PHI in 2015, and then recently the separation.
7 We've had diversity firms support in an M&A advisory
8 role on each of those. And then lastly, we have in the
9 past also included firm's in active roles managing debt
10 financing deals.

11 So always an opportunity to, you know,
12 be creative in all that space and expand debt
13 opportunities. We look at the specific capabilities of
14 each of the banks that we work with. And to the extent
15 they have those capabilities, we look to support them
16 in that fashion.

17 MR. SAGEL: Maybe I can speak for Ameren if you
18 don't mind. And Ryan's comments, you know, I would
19 probably largely echo in terms of our approach. If you
20 measure, you know, participation for MWVBE firms by
21 percentage of underwriting fees paid, Ameren Illinois
22 has increased its level of support for diverse firms.

1 Certainly in recent years, in the period 2014 to 2018,
2 we paid in the range of 2 to 5 percent of our
3 underwriting fees to diverse underwriting firms.

4 Beginning in 2019, we made a more
5 conscientious effort at Ameren Illinois to increase the
6 fee allocation to diverse firms. Ameren Illinois' 2019
7 debt financing paid 7.5 percent of aggregate
8 underwriting fees to diverse banks. And each of the
9 financings that we've completed in 2020, 2021, and
10 2022, year to date, the fee allocation was 8 percent.

11 You know, we like -- Exelon will
12 typically use three to four diverse underwriters on
13 each of our bond transactions rotating amongst a large
14 group of diversity-owned relationship banks. And over
15 time, we've managed relationships with 15 or 20 of
16 these banks, and they tend to rotate through our deals
17 at Ameren Illinois, Ameren Missouri, and our other
18 subsidiaries.

19 And certainly, we'd like to continue to
20 find opportunities for these diverse firms to compete
21 for a larger share of the fee pie going forward, you
22 know, or to determine, like Exelon, if there are ways

1 for them to play and other ancillary business
2 opportunities across the financing strategy spectrum.

3 MS. REESE: So I'm not the treasurer of Southern
4 Company, but I am here to represent the treasurer of
5 Southern Company. And like Ameren and Exelon, we
6 manage the treasury function at the consolidated
7 central level, at the Southern level.

8 I have good notes from our treasury
9 folks, but they play a number of roles much like was
10 described by my colleagues at Ameren and Exelon.
11 They're co-managers on bond issuances. They help us
12 with commercial paper. They help us with tax exempt
13 bonds. They've actually been investing some excess
14 cash for us, and they're active book runners on bond
15 issuances. We have about 14 active MWVBEs in our group
16 right now that we've leveraged at banks, and we paid
17 out in the 2020 and 2021 years about \$2.5 million of
18 fees, and we're set to exceed those in 2022.

19 Important to note that those aren't all
20 Nicor Gas issuances. Those are Southern Company
21 issuances, and the majority of those MWVBE banks are
22 actually based here in Illinois. So we've been very

1 proactive. And I believe that the work that this
2 commission and the general assembly have been doing
3 over the past ten years in this space has absolutely
4 influenced how we think about this at the Southern
5 Company level. So thank you for your leadership in
6 this space.

7 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you. Susan, did you have
8 any -- did you want to add onto that or? Yeah.

9 MS. HAINDL: Just that in talking -- like
10 Southern, the treasury functions happen at the
11 corporate level by our finance department. I know
12 there's definitely very much interest on success in
13 doing this, and I know they're going to continue,
14 although I don't have a lot of numbers to share. I did
15 talk to our treasury department. They are absolutely
16 looking and including, you know, diversity when they're
17 going out for bond issuance.

18 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you for that response.
19 Okay. So we'll have, like, one more question. Can you
20 tell us -- or what are -- well, I think you kind of
21 answered it in regards to challenges with finding
22 diverse contractors and professional services

1 categories with zero to low spend. How is that
2 challenge being approached if you haven't said it
3 already, or can you repeat it?

4 MR. BROWN: I can say from a finance perspective,
5 banking perspective, I mean, there's really maybe 25,
6 26 banks in the space that we know very well, and so we
7 have an open door. See, we've rotated many of those
8 banks, if not all of those banks, on deals in the past,
9 and we're in communications with new parties as they
10 enter. So we haven't really had a challenge of, you
11 know, finding banks to work with, and our reputation
12 has helped us kind of attract new banks as they've
13 entered into the space.

14 Yeah, Gayle had spoke to it a little
15 bit. One of the things we're really proud of that is
16 also a challenge of ours is challenge the non-diverse
17 banks or majority banks to improve their DEI focus and
18 practices. So not to repeat what Gayle had said, but
19 we have an annual Honor Roll Program where we look at a
20 qualitative and quantitative assessment of our
21 non-diverse banking partners to assess their coverage
22 team of us and their support for us and their kind of

1 firm-wide initiatives in the D&I space. We have a
2 public press release that celebrates those that we name
3 to the honor roll and then those that are not on the
4 honor roll.

5 All of the -- all of our banks, non --
6 our non-diverse banks receive an annual kind of
7 feedback based on how they rank within our banking
8 group on a confidential basis and feedback on why they
9 scored the way they did, and then we have conversations
10 with them on how to potentially improve.

11 So it's been a great program for us,
12 but I would say that that's one of the things we feel
13 really good about what we've done in the -- with the
14 diverse banks that we work with, but we've also tried
15 to expand it to kind of challenge the majority banks to
16 improve in that aspect as well.

17 MS. ROBINSON: Thank you. If the commissioners
18 do not have any further questions or comments, we can
19 pass this on to Chairman Zalewski to adjourn our
20 session.

21 CHAIR ZALEWSKI: I just want to say, first of
22 all, thank you to Director Robinson for running a

1 really great event and doing, like you mentioned,
2 this -- it's just the end of a solid nine months of
3 work of preparation. So thank you to you and to Jim
4 and Wei Chen and your team for running a successful
5 policy session and for keeping us on time. That is not
6 easy. You did a wonderful job.

7 I want to thank everyone, of course,
8 who participated and answered our questions. But for
9 everyone for being here, it shows your commitment and
10 interest in the topic. So it's wonderful to be back in
11 person. And thank you for your -- for being here. And
12 then with that, if there's no other objection, the
13 meeting is now adjourned. Thank you.

14 (Meeting adjourned.)
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